

KING -
Historic McKean House
528 - 17th St., N. W.
Washington, D. C.

HABS No. DC-57

HABS
DC
WASH
37-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington 25, D.C.

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Present Owner: Purchased by United Steelworkers of America "as possible building site"

Present Occupant and Use: Apartments

Description:

Pressed brick, substantial town house with ell, described as originally "Containing eighteen large high ceilinged rooms", three stories and full basement. Presence of a fine moulded classic cornice might suggest a change in roofline when further considered with respect to triple windows appearing at all levels except the topmost. Door and window sills are marble. Doorway is framed by columns and has transom and sidelights of leaded glass. An openwork iron porch has graceful curved steps, with railings said to have been cast at Foxall foundry beyond Georgetown. Effectiveness of the porch is spoiled by a Victorian superstructure.

Historical Data:

Year of erection: Early 19th C. *Demolished Feb., 1960.*

Built for (first owner): Col. Josiah Wilson King

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Notable events and occupants

Built by Col. Josiah Wilson King of Port Tobacco, Charles County, Maryland, friend of Major L'Enfant. Col. King resided here until his death in 1833. He is best remembered as having saved the Declaration of Independence when British forces marched on Washington in 1814 (the precious document was hanging in a frame in the Old State Building across the street). This property passed to King's only daughter, Mary, who had married Samuel Miles McKean in 1819 with President and Mr. Madison attending. Reminiscences of Mrs. McKean tell us how her garden joined that of the Octagon House where there was a massive iron gateway and how she frequently strolled with Dolley Madison. Prized possessions of the family were two large mahogany fiddleback chairs presented by the Madisons and L'Enfant's drawing of Washington City.

References: Katherine Elmes Thomas, "The Long Lost Washington. Drawing by Major L'Enfant and the Historic McKean House". Records Columbia Historical Society Vol. 39 (1938) pp. 105-126.
HABI forms prepared by T. Russell Jones and Worth Bailey

Approved

Dick Suthon
Chief Architect

Date

Feb. 17, 1959

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